

CHAPTER 19

The OCONUS Environment

Working and living in overseas locations requires commanders to consider and operate within host-nation culture, language and laws, and prevailing state department agreements. The fact that OCONUS military units do not have the typical community support facilities and services found outside CONUS posts means some requirements must be carried out differently, and additional responsibilities must be integrated. Close positive liaison with local governments and communities, and the command's host-nation government relations officer, will help ensure that operations are executable in the host-nation environment.

THE OCONUS ORGANIZATION

In OCONUS locations, an "installation" can mean anything from an antenna farm to a housing area to a PX area. In USAREUR the term "kasern" or "barracks" is commonly used to identify those places where a unit works or lives. OCONUS installations are geographically dispersed ASGs, BSBs, ASTs, and installations can be "clustered" or be several hundred kilometers apart.

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RESHAPING THE FORCE

Unit changes remain an active issue with both tactical and ASG/BSB commanders. Withdrawing forces from a foreign location has many of the same ramifications that drawing down has in CONUS locations. It impacts the surrounding community's economic, social, and environmental balance. Commanders need to ensure that local political interests are part of the planning process. They need to keep communications open, meet anticipated strength targets, accept custodial responsibilities of remaining facilities, and return installations to the host nation under agreed terms.

USAREUR has been a radical example of force drawdown. USAREUR is still meeting the arms control requirements set forth in international treaties. Located at each ASG (except, currently, the 22d ASG in Vicenza, Italy) is a person responsible for ensuring that USAREUR is in compliance with the treaties and can take necessary action for inspections and oversight. Although they work on site, these employees belong to, and receive their direction from Headquarters USAREUR's ODCSOPS, CFE Division.

ORGANIZATIONAL CONCEPTS

Senior tactical commanders (STCs) are part of the ASG/BSB/AST commanders' network. The focus of the STC is tactical; he is dependent upon the ASG and BSB commanders to support their installation requirements. As senior representatives of the ASG/BSB's customers,

they work with the ASG/BSB commanders to compete for necessary resources. Though not involved in the day-to-day BASOPS operations, they still influence the rating chain (some rate, or intermediate rate ASG commanders).

SUPPORT AGREEMENTS AND TENANT UNITS

US Forces are very visible in a foreign country. From political events to military exercises, to joint ventures, to use of local nationals in the work force, to common threats, commanders must be sensitive to the impact their actions will have on the military and host communities. Each ASG has someone assigned to coordinate actions pertaining to international relations,

agreements, and civil-military cooperation. Commanders are provided support and information through the MACOM Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Host National Activities, US Forces Liaison Officers (USFLOs) and their Assistant for Political and Military Affairs (APMA).

CRISIS MANAGEMENT

In OCONUS locations, commanders must have a means to evacuate the nonmilitary members of their community. For example, USAREUR does this through its Noncombatant Evacuation Operation (NEO) Program. This program is a process to protect and evacuate DOD sponsored noncombatants in Europe during natural disasters, threats or hostile actions against US citizens and their property, or deterioration of security conditions. ASG commanders are responsible for ensuring that their NEO program is current and executable. The S3/DPTMS is the proponent.

As a visible expression of the US commitment to world peace, OCONUS units are often called upon to provide humanitarian support to international missions. Directives for this type of support come from the Humanitarian and Refugee Affairs Office in the Pentagon. Missions can range from providing life support to families of casualties being cared for in US forces installations, to packaging, repairing, and distributing supplies and equipment to war-torn countries.

PERSONNEL AND COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

To ensure that personnel located in OCONUS locations receive comparable mail service to their stateside counterparts, Army Postal Offices (APOs) operate on OCONUS installations. The Postal Battalion has post offices located at each ASG, BSB, and AST.

The disparity between the cost of living in a host-nation economy and a military installation, security measures taken for US citizens living and working on foreign soil, and the imperative to keep Army employees productive and ready during their assignment in Europe, result in access to installations being made

available to other than soldiers and their families. For example in USAREUR, a variety of personnel working for DA are granted the privilege of using facilities normally authorized only for military (commissaries, PX/BXs, libraries, and APOs). DA civilians and some contractors are given identification (ID) cards during their tenure with USAREUR to allow them access to US facilities and services. The local CPO office is the clearing authority for Army personnel for ID issuance; the COR is the clearing authority for contract personnel.

INSTALLATION DPW MANAGEMENT

Civilians assigned to OCONUS locations usually live in off-post housing. Military personnel sometimes live off post, as well. Because of the complexities of dealing in foreign language and with laws that are unfamiliar to most US citizens, DPW runs a Housing Office to facilitate the process. This office gives advice regarding leases, assists in locating acceptable housing, translates associated documents, provides guidance regarding utilities, and is available to help resolve minor disputes between a US renter and local landlord.

In OCONUS locations, the DPW may manage a Household Furnishings Program as exists in USAREUR. Differences in electrical currents mean that US-made appliances will not work overseas. The US government furnishes major appliances for use during the tenure of the employee. By providing basic furnishings, personnel assigned to OCONUS locations can more easily transition into economy housing, without having to expend significant amounts of their own resources.

INSTALLATION DOL RESPONSIBILITIES

Use of vehicles and the authorization to drive in a foreign country is driven by a combination of host-country laws and US State Department agreements. In most cases, ID card holders operate vehicles under conditions similar to those stateside. Testing and operation requirements vary by country. ASG and BSB DOLs operate the inspection stations and drivers testing offices. Note: The Provost Marshal Office is responsible for the registration and issuance of license plates for privately-owned vehicles.

In some overseas locations, for example USAREUR where gas costs are sometime triple that in CONUS, USAREUR provides gas coupons for purchase of fuel on the host economy. Distinction is made between those used for TMP vehicles and those used for private vehicles. AAFES is the proponent for the issuance and account maintenance of coupons, and sells the coupons (based on their cost) at its outlets. The supply staff officer at each ASG orders coupons from AAFES and provides them to motor pool vehicle users within their footprint.

LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICES

The laws governing firearms are more stringent in OCONUS than in CONUS locations. Governed by host-nation laws, treaties and agreements, military regulations, and US customs laws, firearms control is a high-visibility issue that requires commander enforcement. The commander's PMO is the proponent for firearms registration and control.

Because US soldiers, their families, and Army civilians are so visible in a foreign environment, civilian misconduct programs may be instituted. For example, USAREUR instituted the Civilian Misconduct Action Authority (CMAA) for commanders' use. BSB commanders in USAREUR are responsible for the general

welfare, morale, safety, and good order in their geographical areas of responsibility. When any civilian or family member assigned within their AOR threatens those protections, they can be disciplined under the CMAA.

Based upon the local SOFA, the US forces are allowed to import duty free goods for US personnel. Agreements require the military take appropriate measures to prevent abuse of this privilege. The objective is to prevent illegal introduction of these commodities in the host-nation's economy. A ration card, issued to ID card holders, serves to meet this objective. The cards specify which commodities are controlled.

SUMMARY

OCONUS organizations operate in an ever-changing environment. Though many BASOPS activities stay relatively stable from day-to-day, many others do not. Commanders in overseas locations are significantly

affected by local and international events, interests, and perceptions, as well as mandates from DOD and Congress. The policies and structures will change, as necessary, to meet such challenges.